

FRANK



READE

WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

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No. 1.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 31, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

FRANK READE, JR.'S "WHITE CRUISER" OF THE CLOUDS; OR, THE SEARCH FOR THE DOG-FACED MEN.

By "NONAME".



The dog-faced men were coming down the slope like a whirlwind. Jedediah sprang up on the ladder. Pomp followed him. Then Barney sent the airship skyward. Up from the ground clinging to the rope ladder went the three men.

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s, "White Cruiser" of the Clouds

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR THE DOG-FACED MEN.

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CHAPTER I.

A QUEER VISITOR.

One of the most beautiful little cities in America is Readestown. There are located the famous works of Frank Reade, Jr., the most noted inventor in the world.

Frank Reade, Jr., is a young, well built and handsome fellow, gifted beyond the ordinary, else he would never have become so famous as the inventor of the wonderful air-ships, electric machines and submarine boats credited to him.

For several generations the Reades had dwelt in Readestown, an ancestor having founded the town.

Upon the banks of the beautiful river which flowed by the town were the electric works of our hero. They covered a large area, and many hundred skilled artisans and machinists were employed.

With this brief introduction of our hero and his home, let us pass quickly on to the incidents of this thrilling narrative, which is very likely what the reader desires most.

Upon a pleasant June morning Frank Reade, Jr., sat in his private room at the works looking over some plans.

Suddenly there came a sharp rap at the door.

Frank jumped up in surprise.

"I wonder who that is?" he exclaimed, sotto voce. "It don't sound like Barney or Pomp, and there are strict orders to allow no one else to come here."

Again came the rap.

"Gosh all hemlock! heow many more times hev I got tew rap? Are yew tew hum, tew-day, Mister Reade?"

The expression of astonishment upon Frank's handsome face was comical.

"Who on earth is that?" he muttered. "I'll soon find out."

With a quick impulse he stepped forward and threw open the door. He started back with an exclamation.

It would have required but a very little stretch of the imagination for Frank to have recognized the caricatured Uncle Sam, employed by cartoonists as a type of the United States Government.

The man who stood before him was a curious looking individual.

In form he was tall and exceedingly angular, with cadaverous features. In dress he had the appearance of having just stepped out of a curio shop with the garments of an ancestor upon his back.

He wore a tall hat after the "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" pattern prevalent about 1840. His coat was a long swallow tail of snuff colored cloth with broad lapels, his waistcoat curiously figured and yielding to a shirt with broad ruffled bosom. His breeches were strapped under the insteps of heavy top boots.

He was a correct version of the typical Vermont Yankee of a decade since, with keen twinkling eyes, long chin whiskers and yellow hair.

Frank was so astonished at this unseemly apparition that he could not for a moment speak.

This seemed to tax the visitor's patience.

"Wall, by jingo!" he exclaimed, testily. "Didn't yew ever see a man before? Why don't yew axe me in a leetle perlite like? If yew was tew come tew Skattles, Varmount, whar I live, yew'd find the latch string eout all the time. That's the way we uns does. But yew new fangled critters hev queer notions anyway."

"Am I dreaming?" muttered Frank. "Or where did this antediluvian specimen come from, anyway?"

But aloud he said curtly:

"How did you get in here?"

"How did I git in yer?" exclaimed the pilgrim from Skattles. "Waal, I walked in."

"That is queer!" exclaimed Frank. "I gave Barney and Pomp orders to allow no one to come here."

"Oh, ye did, eh!" exclaimed the strange visitor.

"Didn't you meet a negro or an Irishman at the gate?"

"Waal, now I think of it, I jest 'low I did meet a nigger an' an Irishman out thar, an' they tried a leetle bit of a rastlin' trick with me that didn't work. Oh, I used ter be ther king pin rastler up in Varmount. I'm great on catch holts, I am. Wall, I jest picked them infants up an' dumped 'em over ther wall an' shut ther gate on 'em. Oh, they couldn't rastle so well as my ten-year-old boy up in Skattles!"

Frank could not help to smile at the thought of Barney and Pomp, two faithful servitors of his, receiving such treatment as this at the hands of the tall Yankee.

There was something in the Yankee's manner that pleased Frank.

He threw the door wide open, and said:

"Well, my friend, I don't allow visitors to this room, but I'll make an exception in your case. To whom am I indebted for this?"

"Wall, now, I like that!" cried the visitor, extending a hand which looked as if a blow from it would brain an ox. "Dang me if I ain't a leetle bit teched on ye, friend. Put it thar! I'm Jedediah Onslow, from Skattles, Varmount."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Onslow!" said Frank. "Take a chair. What is your business with me?"

"Wall, it's somethin' mighty important, or yer kin bet I wudn't be here, fer it's ther fust time in my life that I hev bin more'n ten miles away from Skattles. I 'low the world's a good sight bigger nor I thought it was."

"Well, it must seem quite a wonderful thing to you," said Frank, with a laugh. "Skattles is not a metropolis, is it!"

"A what? Oh, no yew see we hev'n't got tew that sort of thing yit. But ye mustn't think we uns in Skattles are fools. I've took ther Tribune fer nigh on forty years, an' I voted fer Horace Greeley because he was a hard-shell Democrat. I've read about yew an' yer wonderful flyin' machines, and by gosh t'almighty, I thought I'd come down an' make a proposal to ye."

"Indeed!" said Frank with a broad smile. "What is it?"

"Wall, this is how it come about. Ye see, me'n Peleg Shinders hed a big argyment in Trust & Stiekem's store t'other day, up in Skattles. I hed jist been readin' about

them people out in Central Afriky as they calls dog-faced men. Waal, Peleg he 'lowed 'twas all a lie, an' I stuck tew it that it was true. So fr'm that we made a bet of fifteen dollars that one or t'other wus wrong, an' I 'greed tew cum here an' lay the matter afore yew fer settlement. Now, if ye'll take one of your air-ships an' go out thar tew Afriky an' settle the question, dang my buskins if I won't agree tew go with yew."

Frank had a coughing fit behind his handkerchief. He recovered himself quickly, however, and said:

"Well, Mr. Onslow, don't you think you were a bit rash in making that bet with your neighbor?"

"Eh?" sputtered Jedediah, "I reckoned ye'd go right quick jist fer patriotism, which they say ye've got a heap of."

"Well, patriotism is a good argument," said Frank, with a powerful effort to restrain his mirth.

"Tell ye what I'll do, boss," said the Yankee, lowering his voice. "I don't keer so much about ther money as I dew about beatin' that cantankerous Peleg. Now, I'll just divide with ye on ther bet."

Frank feigned great dignity.

"Mr. Onslow," he said sternly, "what do you take me for? Have you any idea what it would cost to take a trip to Africa in my air-ship?"

"I 'low it would cost pooty well," admitted Jedediah, slowly.

"It will cost thousands of dollars!"

"Sho! yew don't mean it?"

Jedediah sat like one crushed for a moment. Then he smiled in a sickly way and got upon his feet.

"Waal, I 'low I better go back to Skattles," he said, lugubriously. "Yew young fry air tew fast for us old stagers."

He started for the door, but Frank was suddenly smitten with pity for the old fellow in spite of his comical inconsistency.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Onslow," he said. "Perhaps I can help you!"

The Yankee turned eagerly.

"Yew don't mean it," he gasped. "Not for fifteen dollars, I reckon?"

"We won't think about that," said Frank, pleasantly, "but by a queer coincidence you have come here just at the right time. I finished my new air-ship, the 'White Cruiser of the Clouds,' yesterday, and have decided to take an exploring trip to Central Africa at once. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I will make a search for the dog-faced men while I'm there, and no doubt I shall find them. In the meantime hold your wager in abeyance, and I will cable you from Cape Town or some other part at the first opportunity of my success or failure. That is the best I can do for you."

Jedediah gave Frank's hand a squeeze that made the young inventor jump.

"Yew are a brick!" he cried, "but if yew will take me along with ye——"

"Impossible!" said Frank, decidedly. "I can only take Barney and Pomp, my two trusted men, with me."

"Hump," grunted Jedediah. "Thar can't nary one on

'em rastle fer a cent. Yew might need a good rastler, Mister Reade!"

Jedediah's manner was so earnest and pleading that Frank felt like yielding.

But it did not seem practicable to take along a passenger who might be only an incumbrance, so he was about to reiterate his refusal when a startling thing happened.

There was a wild yell like an Indian whoop, and the hurrying of feet, and the next moment into the room burst a stout, short built darky with a comical looking little Irishman at his elbow.

They made a dash for Jedediah.

"Whurro! let me at the omadhoun phwat flung me over the fince!" roared Barney. "Av I don't pound the loife out av him thin me name is Dinnis, which it ain't!"

"Golly! jes' yo' lemme lay out dat chap wha' 'sisted mah authority!" roared Pomp, belligerently. "I jes' bet he don't try fo' to get by dis chile agin!"

Jedediah humped up his back and cried:

"Look out thar, yew fellers! Don't ye tackle old Varmount agin or yew'll git broke in tew. Jemima's ghost! Gosh all hemlock! Whoopla! Durn my socks!"

The next moment the three combatants were locked in a tremendous wrestle. It was all so comical that Frank Reade, Jr., could not control himself sufficiently to attempt to separate them.

Round and round the room they went in a mad career.

But Barney and Pomp had tackled the wrong individual. The Vermont Yankee wrestler is noted the world over as a famous combination of muscles and cords unequalled in that line on earth.

A Vermonter in a wrestle is ever in his element, and it may be safely said that Jedediah actually enjoyed doubling his assailants up.

"Hip lock an' shoulder bend!" he cried. "Naow fer a back lock. Gosh all hemlock! Yew chaps kain't rastle."

This was very evident.

Jedediah threw Barney like a flash and piled Pomp on top of him.

The two defenders of Frank Reade, Jr.'s private sanctum were not in it, figuratively speaking. In a jiffy Uncle Jedediah had them hors du combat.

CHAPTER II.

EN ROUTE FOR CENTRAL AFRICA.

Frank Reade, Jr.'s, estimate of the Yankee was vastly changed after witnessing the wrestling bout.

In fact, in that moment he saw wherein the credulous, but redoubtable Vermonter would be of great service to him.

"He is a chap of pluck and strength and native wit," he instantly reflected. "I've a conceit that it would not be a bad plan to take him along with me to Central Africa, after all. I could easily make him useful aboard the White Cruiser."

"Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, despairingly, from beneath Barney, where the breath was being crushed out of him; "fo' de Lor's sake will youse pull dat fool I'ishman off me? He kill me, for suah!"

"Shut up, yez black misfit!" roared Barney, angrily. "Av I cud git up, wouldn't I? D'ye s'pose I'm lyin' here av me own choice?"

"Dunno nuffin' 'bout dat," squealed Pomp, "but I 'clar to gracious yo' will be de deaf ob me!"

At this Jedediah burst into roars of laughter, and let his two victims up.

They scrambled to their feet thoroughly subdued and crestfallen.

"Hev yew fellers had enough yit?" asked the Yankee, coolly. "If yew would like to jest try a new collar an' elbow——"

"Whurroo! don't yez come near me!" cried Barney, in terror. "Ye're the bivil, be jabers!"

Frank recovered from his mirth enough to say with affected sternness:

"What do you chaps mean by coming in here and pouncing onto this gentleman in this manner?"

"Shure, sor!" cried Barney, excitedly, "didn't yez tell us not to let any wan into yer private office to-day?"

"I did!" replied Frank, "but you were a little over-zealous, that is all. Go back to your post, now, and I will send for you when I want you."

Barney and Pomp sheepishly withdrew, and the Yankee chuckled.

"I don't see wha' fo' Marse Frank take any stock in dat chap fo'!" cried Pomp, with disgust. "He am jes' common ole farmer, he am!"

"Be jabers, but he kin lick the stuffin' out av us, naygur!" cried Barney. "Shure, we're not in it!"

"Huh! I wondah what ebber he want wif Marse Frank, anyhow?"

"Be jabers, I'll bet he's some crank as wants ter go to Afriky with Misther Frank!"

"Marse Frank, neber take him. He don't want no good for nuffins."

But the two faithful servitors of the great inventor were not always able to successfully diagnose their master's plans.

Left alone with the Yankee, Frank said:

"Friend Onslow, you're anxious to go to Central Africa, are you?"

"Yew bet!" replied the Yankee.

"Well, if you will agree to certain things you shall have your wish."

The Yankee slapped his huge palms together with tremendous force, and cried:

"Gosh durn my old boots! that air jest bully, an' yew kin bet I'll jest agree tew anything yew say. Naow, haow it that?"

"All right!" cried Frank, with a laugh. "It is settled. You shall go to Central Africa with me and I'll match you against the strongest man in that part of the world in a wrestle."

"Yew kin bet yure best caow on thet," cried Jedediah,

excitedly. "An' naow tew bizness. When shall we start?"

"Within ten days," replied Frank; "but if you wish I will show you the craft we shall go in. My new White Cruiser of the Clouds!"

Jedediah was crazy with delight, and Frank led him across a small courtyard to a door in a large high-roofed building.

Entering this they came into a long and high-arched room, in the center of which, upon rollers or truck, sat the wonderful air-ship.

Jedediah stood mouth agape for a moment and gazed at the wonderful sight.

"Waal, I'll be durned!" he gasped. "Yew hev got a beauty thar an' no mistake. Gosh hanged if I ever seen so pooty a skiff as thet afore in my life!"

The White Cruiser of the Clouds was certainly a beautiful creation.

Her shape was something like that of the new government warship, with a graceful sloping contour of hull and a prodigious length of bow cut sheer.

The material of which the White Cruiser was made was purest aluminum, yet sufficiently annealed to present a surface so hard that the ordinary rifle ball could not penetrate it.

The deck was narrow and railed in the whole length of the ship. There was a turret forward, in which was a pneumatic electric gun of light material, but capable of throwing a deadly bolt of dynamite.

Amidships was a cabin and stairway leading into the saloon. Aft was a smaller cabin in which Barney and Pomp had quarters, and it was connected with the galley and the dynamo rooms.

The turret forward contained also the steering apparatus and electric keyboard, and also a powerful searchlight.

Three masts arose from the ship's deck, supporting three powerful rotascopes, any one of which alone was capable of supporting the ship in the air.

At the stern was the propeller, a huge combination of spoon-shaped fans, and also the rudder.

The appointments of the White Cruiser were magnificent.

Frank Reade, Jr., had spared no expense in the furnishings and outfitting.

The cabin was richly draped and furnished, with a dining-table supplied with the choicest of silver and china.

The saloon was magnificent in its splendor. The draperies were of the costliest material, the silks and plushes were fine and bric-a-brac was plentiful.

In the hold of the air-ship were rich stores, fit only for the table of the richest of men. Truly, the White Cruiser was a typical floating palace of the air.

Frank Reade, Jr., had not spared expense nor pains in the fitting up of his air-ship.

Jedediah gazed spellbound about him.

To him it was like being transported to fairy land.

"Waal, I swow!" he muttered, in a dazed way. "If my wife, Jemima, was here naow she'd beg for a dress like that are curtain thar! I reckon she'd go crazy over these 'ere fine things!"

Frank took the pains to show the Yankee everything pertaining to the invention.

Down in the dynamo-room Uncle Jed was dumbfounded at the intricacy of the wonderful electrical machinery.

"I'll be dog-gasted if I kin see haow ye ever invented such a thing!" he rejoined. "I reckon ye've got a bigger brain nor Daniel Webster fer ter do it."

Frank laughed heartily. Then he escorted his visitor to the yard gate.

Here he consulted a calendar.

"Let me see, Uncle Jed!" he said. "Supposing you come here next Thursday morning at nine. Be on time, for we want to start promptly."

"Du yew mean thet?" asked the Yankee, sharply.

"I do."

"Waal, by jingo, I'll be hyar! Shell I bring along a change of clothing?"

"Yes, several," replied Frank, with a laugh. "It will be some time before you get back home again."

The Yankee squeezed Frank's hand almost to a jelly.

"By gosh't almighty, I'll be hyar on time!" he cried. Then as he walked away he muttered repeatedly:

"Great ham bones! What'll Jemima say? I'm off fer Afriky fer sure. Heigho! What will Jemima say, sure?"

The news was too good for Uncle Jed to keep.

He had to tell everybody he saw, and the result was the reporters got hold of the yarn.

The enterprising chaps got up a big cartoon and a graphic account of Uncle Jed's visit to Frank Reade, Jr. The matter of Jedediah's bet with Peleg was enlarged upon and the whole country was soon agog with interest.

Sporting men made wagers on the question of Jedediah's success; people in general laughed heartily, and all waited with great expectancy for the result.

That Frank Reade, Jr., would find the dog-faced men, if such existed, no one had the least doubt.

The young inventor's persistence and his fertile resources were well known, and failure to him was an unknown quantity.

Floods of letters from cranks all over the country poured in upon Frank, but he paid no heed to them.

Fresh stores were placed aboard the White Cruiser, a trial trip made to test the machinery, and Thursday morning she was announced as all ready for the start.

It was decided to take a course due eastward until the Gold Coast was reached, and then push into the central part of Africa.

A mighty crowd gathered the day of the start.

Barney and Pomp in natty uniforms were on deck, and Frank Reade, Jr., was the center of a knot of interested men discussing matters when the starting hour arrived.

A gong rang in the yard.

Frank stepped upon the gang plank.

"All roight, Mистер Frank!" cried Barney.

"Good for you, Barney," cried the young inventor. "But where is Uncle Jed? Has he backed out, I wonder?"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the yard gate swung open and in dashed a carriage.

In the carriage sat Uncle Jed, a living prototype of Uncle Sam. Upon the rack of the vehicle were piled his trunks.

"Gosh hang it, Mister Reade!" cried the Yankee, leaping upon the air-ship's deck, "I was delayed on account of my best pair of steers gittin' lost in the pastur, an' hed tew hunt 'em up, or Jemima wouldn't hev let me cum away—'thout I did. But I reckon ye wouldn't start 'thout me nohaow!"

"You're just in time," said Frank. "Pile those traps aboard, Barney and Pomp!"

The two servitors quickly obeyed. Then they flew to their posts, one in the pilot-house and the other in the engine room.

There was a whirring of the rotascope, and the great air-ship arose like a monster bird of prey.

Up shot the air-ship.

A salute of guns was fired below, rockets rose in the air, people cheered madly.

Frank and Uncle Jed leaned over the rail waving Americans flags.

Up went the air-ship, and then set out due east.

Soon the mighty panorama of the earth's surface below began to rapidly move. Readestown quickly passed from sight and the great journey was begun.

Our friends were off for Central Africa. Thrilling adventures were in store for them.

States were crossed, cities and towns passed over, and then the broad Atlantic came in sight.

The air-ship could sail nights as well as days, and the nights just now were perfect, the moon lending mellow radiance.

For days the White Cruiser hung over the tossing waters of the Atlantic.

One moonlight night, Frank Reade, Jr., sat by the rail looking downward, when he saw an object upon the surface of the sea.

It required but a momentary glance to decide him to go to the searchlight, and turn its rays down upon that object.

Even at that distance, a thousand feet, Frank saw that it was a human being clinging to a drifting spar.

It was a man almost devoid of clothing, and who clung with waning strength to the drifting spar.

He tried to wave his arm and shout as the air-ship began to descend. But it nearly resulted in his slipping from the spar.

"Gol durn me if it ain't some chap what has got tossed overboard from some ship most likely!" cried Jedediah. "Gosh t' blazes! air yu goin' tu take him on board, Mister Reade?"

"Of course I am," replied Frank. "Do you think I could let the poor chap drown?"

"I 'lowed you wouldn't do that!"

"Barney!" cried Frank. "Drop a rope over the rail to the poor chap!"

"All right, sor!" cried the Celt.

Down went the rope and in a few moments it was within the castaway's reach. He seized it and with difficulty wound it around his body.

This done he signaled to those above to pull away.

Barney and Pomp on the rope did so with a will.

Up came the castaway and in a few moments was lifted over the rail.

He was dripping with sea water and almost devoid of clothing. What was left upon him was tattered and shredded.

He was deadly white and hollow-eyed, but in spite of this it could be seen that he was a fine featured, splendidly formed man of possibly thirty years, and to the manor born.

He staggered a moment as he stood upon the air-ship's deck and gazed about him in a dazed way.

"My God!" he exclaimed, huskily. "What strange thing is this? Is it but another of my fever fancies, or am I in another world?"

"It is neither, my good sir!" said Frank Reade, Jr., cheerily. "You are on the deck of the White Cruiser and among friends."

The castaway drew a deep breath.

"God be praised if it be true," he said, earnestly, "but what does it mean? This is a ship which floats in the air."

"You are right," replied Frank. "It is an air-ship, and I am Frank Reade, Jr., the captain and owner."

A glad cry broke from the castaway's lips, and a light of comprehension flashed across his face.

"Ah, now I understand!" he cried. "You are Frank Reade, Jr., the inventor of air-ships, whose name I have heard in every part of the world."

"I am," replied Frank.

"Sir, I am glad to meet you. It is a kind Providence which brought you this way, just at a time when I believed that my last hope was gone."

"We happened along just in time."

"You did. I am James Trent of Trent Hall, Shropshire, England, and my family are of the oldest in the King's domains. My story is a dark and terrible one, but I must tell it to you. I feel sure that I shall enlist your sympathy and your aid."

"You may be sure that we will give you all the help we can," replied Frank.

CHAPTER III.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

Frank could not determine more than this at the moment. Nor whether it was a man or woman clinging to the spar.

But he shouted to Barney:

"Stop the propeller, Barney! Let the ship down a little!"

The Celt quickly obeyed.

The ship began to sink rapidly, and now Frank once more operated the searchlight.

As the air-ship drew nearer the water the young inventor was able to see the castaway more plainly.

"A thousand thanks! You see me now a tattered wretch. Two weeks ago I left New York upon the steamer Trojan for England. I was to go at once to Trent Hall, and there in a few weeks to be married to the girl I love, who is one of the wealthiest heiresses in Great Britain, Lady Evelyn Tremain of Ridge Manor, near Trent Hall.

"With me upon leaving New York was my cousin Royal Trask. He was to be my best man at the wedding. I had always placed great trust in Royal.

"But before we had been at sea a day I discovered that he was profoundly jealous of me. He had never seen the girl to whom I was engaged, but he knew that she was an heiress. He is penniless himself, and the thought that I was going to better my position hurt him.

"One curious fact perhaps influenced him in his villainous course.

"He was the exact likeness of me in the face, form and manners. If we had been twin brothers the likeness could not have been more striking.

"These thoughts no doubt set Royal to brooding. He was a fellow of violent temper, capricious tastes and hard in conscience.

"One night we sat upon the rear deck. The hour was midnight and a storm was just coming on.

"There in the blackness he leaped upon me, hissing:

"'Ah! cousin of mine, you shall not live to supersede me. Your bride and your fortune shall be mine. From this hour I am James Trent, and you are Royal Trask, and Royal Trask is at the bottom of the sea.'

"With which he lifted me up bodily and threw me over the rail. Down into the water I went.

"My shouts were unheard. The steamer went on and I was left to the mercy of the wind and waves.

"Fortunately I was a strong swimmer, and I kept up for some hours when I came across a drifting spar to which I have clung for several days. But God has spared my life and I may yet foil Royal Trask!"

James Trent sank in a chair quite overcome. Frank Reade, Jr., hastened to grasp his hand and cried:

"You shall foil him, and I will help you to do it. Come to the cabin and you shall be cared for!"

But the castaway's head dropped upon his breast.

He had fainted.

Barney and Pomp, however, picked him up in their strong arms and carried him to the cabin.

Here he was given a good bath and stimulants after he came to, and then put to bed.

The next day, after twelve hours of refreshing sleep, he was strong enough to arise and dress himself.

Frank furnished him clothing, and did all in his power to make him comfortable.

The young inventor also put all speed on and sent the White Cruiser ahead at terrific speed.

"We will get you there in time to foil your rascally cousin, if possible," declared the young inventor.

"Oh, I can never fully repay you!" declared Trent, gratefully. "I owe you my life—all in the world."

"Do not speak of it," replied Frank. "I am a great stick-

ler for justice and right, and I mean to see you through."

Uncle Jedediah was, perhaps, the most interested of anybody in the distinguished passenger.

As soon as he learned that he was a real live nobleman, he sought every opportunity for conversation with Trent.

To the Englishman the Yankee was the source of much interest and amusement.

"He is the most unique specimen I ever saw," he declared to Frank. "On my word, he is the real Englishman's idea of a Yankee."

Uncle Jed was consumed with interest in King Edward and his court.

"I reckon ye know ther Prince of Wales, don't yu?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," replied Trent, "he is one of my dearest friends."

"Sho! You don't say. I s'pose he's a leetle better than the ordinary, eh?"

"Well, I don't think that he feels that way. Of course, he is a prince of the blood."

"Yas. Waal, would he speak to a common chap like me, if I was tewaddress him?"

"I have no doubt of it, if you used politeness and respect."

"Gol durned if I wouldn't like tu shake his paw. But I allus had an ijee that he didn't take much stock in us Yankees on account of ther lickin' we gave you Britishers in the time of ther Revolution."

Trent smiled at this.

"That affair is a buried memory," he said. "Britishers do not espouse the lost causes of their ancestors."

"Wall, they hadn't forgotten it as late as sixty-one, fer if yu will remember, ther Alabama affair——"

"I plead guilty!" laughed Trent. "You are too sharp for me, Uncle Jed. But I can see no reason why we should quarrel!"

"Kain't see as we are!" said the old man, whittling away steadily at a stick, "but I'll bet my jack-knife agin yure gold watch, that yu folks never'll see the day when yu kin whip Uncle Sam!"

"When would the result of that wager be decided, Uncle Jed?" asked Trent, mischievously. "Not in our day I guess. So you had better keep your jack-knife, and I'll keep my gold watch!"

Jedediah saw that he could not possibly pick a quarrel with the good-natured Britisher.

So he gave it up.

But at this moment Barney and Pomp bounced on deck.

Barney wore a grin which expanded his comical mug to the seeming width of a yard, and carried a fiddle under his arm.

Pomp showed a grinning row of ivories, and carried a banjo.

"I done fink yo' lak to hear a lily bit ob a seringnade, Marse Trent!" insinuated Pomp, giving the banjo a rattle. "Wha' yo say 'bout it?"

"Delighted," replied the Englishman, eagerly. "Nothing would please me more!"

"Don't yez take no stock in the naygur an' his whangety-

bang, plantashun mellojies!" cried Barney, contemptuously. "Av yez wud only listen to ould Erin's harp that onct——"

"Jes' hol' on, I'ish!" expostulated Pomp. "Give de genleman time to say which wan he lak fust, cain't you?"

"A'right, naygur!" cried Barney. "Begorra, I'll begin to scrape me bow thin!"

"Well, I'll tell you how to settle it," cried Trent, fearing a quarrel.

"How am dat, sah?"

"I'll toss up a silver quarter. The man who gets the toss gets the play and the shilling, too. See!"

"A'right, sah!"

Up flipped the silver coin.

It came heads up and this was Barney's choice.

The Celt at once began to fiddle.

There was no kind of a tune that Barney could not elicit from that wonderful violin.

Indeed his reputation was great in Readestown, and there were many good judges of music who acknowledged him a master.

Garry Owen, Sweet Kathleen, and many old Irish ballads followed.

Barney had a fine, rich voice, and he sang in a ravishing way. Trent listened like one enraptured.

"Oh, tall and stately was her form,
An' red brown was her hair,
An' rich an' costly were the robes
This Irish girl did wear."

Pomp was not to be outdone. His banjo was quickly tuned, and he began to render some plantation melodies and songs which were indescribable.

Uncle Ned, Black Joe, the Old Cabin Home, and many another followed, and many a comical ditty.

"Oh, I went to bed las' night;
I was lyin' half awake,
When Satan came to my bedside,
Good Lor' how I did shake."

Pomp had twanged his last solo, and vamped his last accompaniment, when Frank Reade, Jr., at the rail gave a loud cry:

"Land ho!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE USURPER FOILED.

In an instant all sprung to their feet.

"Land ho!"

The cry meant much to the Englishman, James Trent. It meant that the broad Atlantic was crossed and that England was reached at last.

He was now very near home. But a few hours would

suffice to take the air-ship in its flight across the tight little island.

This thought excited the Englishman greatly, and he now paced the air-ship's deck with no other thought.

A few hours later the air-ship passed over a part of Scotland, and was now directly over England.

Frank had located Shropshire on the map, and Trent had indicated the location of Ridge Manor.

It was near dark, however, before the air-ship hovered over Shropshire.

The face of the country below was eagerly scanned by those on board of the air-ship.

Trent himself pointed out the different localities, and finally cried:

"There is Ridge Manor. Just beyond you will see Trent Hall!"

Ridge Manor was seen to be a very large and beautiful estate.

Its lands were broad and fertile and divided with beautiful hedges of green.

The Hall itself was an old mansion of the Elizabethan pattern. As it was evening lights began to gleam from the windows and through the grounds.

"Something is going on down there!" cried Frank, with conviction.

"It is the wedding!" exclaimed Trent, feverishly. "Can you let me down there at once, Mr. Reade?"

"Certainly!" replied Frank.

The young inventor selected a good place in the grounds to alight.

Then the air-ship descended and rested upon the grounds in the midst of a clump of fancifully trimmed cedars.

Nobody saw its descent for it was too dark.

Frank quickly made arrangements.

The wedding had not yet taken place, for the rumble of carriages could be heard bringing guests.

The plan was for Lord Trent to break in upon the ceremony, confront the false bridegroom, and denounce him.

It would not do to leave the air-ship alone, so Frank commissioned Pomp and Jedediah to remain aboard.

Then with Barney and Lord Trent the young inventor set out for the manor.

In a few moments they had traversed the intervening distance and reached the broad front steps.

The wide door were thrown open and beyond the gay costumes of guests were seen, and music floated out upon the air.

Lord Trent ascended the steps and entered the hall.

Two liveried servants confronted him, but he brushed them aside.

Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney were at his elbow.

The bridal party stood before an altar of flowers. The minister was just ready to read the service.

Straight into the room stalked Lord Trent.

"Hold!" he cried, in a voice of thunder. "I forbid this wedding!"

A sensation was created.

Several ladies fainted, gentlemen gazed in amazement

at the speaker, the bride tottered, and the bridegroom turned about and faced the newcomer.

One glance the false bridegroom gave and then he staggered back, gasping:

"My God—it is Trent—back from the sea—back from the dead!"

"Yes, back from the dead, Royal Trask!" cried Trent, firmly. "Back to face you and foil your villainy!"

Lord Tremain, father of the bride, a fine looking old gentleman, strode forward.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, tensely. "What does this mean?"

"It means, sir, that you are being victimized by an impostor!" cried Lord Trent. "Yonder man is the impostor!"

"But who are you?"

"I am Lord Trent."

The old nobleman glanced from one face to the other. The look of guilt upon Trask's face convicted him. But yet the father of the bride was puzzled.

"What does this mean?" he cried. "We believe yonder man to be Lord Trent! If he is not then we have been deceived!"

"You have been deceived!" cried Lord Trent, vigorously. "Yonder impostor is my cousin, whose likeness to me induced him to play a villainous game. In mid-ocean he threw me from the steamer's deck, and then came here and has masqueraded as the real Lord Trent. Evelyn, my love, do you not know me?"

The bride gave one frightened glance at the face of the false bridegroom.

Then with a glad cry she sprang to the arms of the real Lord Trent.

Explanations were quickly made. It was a very romantic affair, but as the villain's plans had been thwarted all were happy.

The treacherous cousin was allowed to escape, with a threat that if seen in the country again he would be delivered up to justice.

Then the wedding went on and the real Lord Trent claimed his bride.

All was happiness and joy.

A merry time was had. Frank Reade, Jr., was introduced to all the party and right royally entertained.

The next day all made a visit of inspection to the air-ship and it was an object of admiration and wonderment to all.

Frank could have spent a season at Ridge Manor and been feted like a prince.

But the young inventor was upon a far different mission and soon the air-ship was once more en route to Africa.

"Begorra, I wudn't moind bein' a lord mesilf!" said Barney, smacking his lips. "It's the foinest taste av the crayther I've had fer many a year!"

"Golly!" cried Pomp, rolling up his eyes, "I done tought yo' was def on de English aristocracy, I'ish!"

"Are yez a fool, nayger, that yez didn't remark that I made no specifications?" retorted Barney. "Shure a man kin be a lord widout bein' an Englisher!"

Pomp collapsed and Jedediah discreetly kept silent.

But John Bull's island was soon left far behind and the air-ship passed down the coast of Spain over the rocks of Gibraltar and finally sighted the peak of Teneriffe.

The Canary Islands, Cape Blanco, and Cape Verde were passed.

Then along the Gold Coast of North Guinea and finally Frank passed Fernando Po and sighted Cape Lopez.

From here he had decided to strike into the interior.

Accordingly, the air-ship left the coast and passed over the wild land into the interior of Africa.

It must be remembered that Africa is a mighty continent and the interior or central part of Africa was not to be reached by the air-ship in a day.

The course taken by Frank, he calculated, would bring him in time directly to the source of the Congo River.

From there he intended exploring the country toward Lake Nyanza, the source of the Nile and push down from there into the Zambesi region, coming out eventually at Cape Town.

From there Frank intended sailing home.

In all this region, if no trace was found of the dog-faced men, then it would be reasonable to suppose that they were not in existence.

Jedediah was now vastly interested in the country.

Great tracts of wilderness was passed over, great swamps and marshes peopled with reptile and hippopotami.

Plains wide and level where roamed deer and all manner of wild beasts.

Mountain ranges and lakes and rivers and forests so dense that their foliage could scarcely be penetrated by the sun.

All these things passed like a vast panorama before the gaze of the voyagers. In was indeed all a wonderful sight.

At last after several days' sail over this wonderful country a mighty forest was reached which seemed alive with monkeys and beautifully plumaged birds.

"Let us stop awhile here," said Frank. "I want to explore this region."

The others readily agreed to this.

The air-ship descended and rested upon a slight eminence, from which a good view of the region around could be had.

Then things were made ship-shape aboard the White Cruiser.

The cabins were locked, and Barney, who was to remain aboard as guard, took up his station in the turret forward.

"Now, if I give a signal for assistance," said Frank, "raise the ship and come after us."

"All right, sor," said Barney.

The signal was to be a sharp whistle, and all was understood.

Then Frank and Pomp and Jedediah left the air-ship.

They were dressed in light suits of white duck—that is, Frank and Pomp were. The Yankee would not change.

They were armed to the teeth with Winchesters, Derringers and knives, for they knew not what sort of an enemy they might encounter.

The African sun was powerfully hot, and seemed likely to melt our explorers as they crossed the open land.

But they soon reached the shade of the mighty forest, where the sunlight could not very well penetrate.

Here all was a peculiar gloom.

It was a wonderful and most impressive sight.

The trees were monsters in girth and height, and their foliage was so thickly interwoven that daylight could hardly penetrate them.

"Gosh all hemlock!" muttered Jedediah, in amazement; "that's stouter timber nor I ever see on ther Green Mountings in old Varmount. I never seen its ekal afore."

"I think not, Uncle Jed," said Frank, with a laugh; "that is pretty heavy timber. Look at that big rosewood tree. Why, it would be a fortune sawed up and delivered in London!"

The vines, which were thick overhead, were of most beautiful varieties, and some of them bore beautiful flowers.

Mosses of wonderful depth grew upon the tree trunks.

The natural treasures spread about were far beyond description, but certainly such as would have delighted the heart of the most enthusiastic botanist.

Trickling streams ran through the forest, and a distant roaring sound told of the cataracts of a river.

The adventurers gazed upon all this with interest.

But if they were bewitched with the flora of this region the fauna was to afford them even keener wonderment.

Jedediah approached a little copse, and a couple of beautiful little wood deer sprang out.

Pomp wanted to try a shot at them, but Frank interposed.

"It would be needless slaughter," he said. "We will wait and have a hunt later on."

The trees were filled with chattering monkeys.

Jedediah, passing under a tree, was gazing at the sights about him, when a comical thing happened.

Four of the monkeys suddenly let themselves down in a chain, and one of them grabbed his beaver from his head.

CHAPTER V.

DENIZENS OF THE FOREST.

The act was so quickly and cutely done that the Yankee had not time to clap his hands upon his hat and prevent it.

Such a shriek of mischief and joy went up from the monkeys as made the woods ring.

Jedediah gave one leap upward and began to storm about like a madman.

The monkeys were now far in the tree tops.

Their actions were comical.

One put the hat upon his head and immediately vanished from sight in it. Then the hat was passed from one to another in a game of catch, which it was bewildering to follow.

Backward and forward through the tree tops went Jedediah's hat like a football, while the monkeys shrieked and danced with wildest glee.

It was certainly a very funny spectacle.

Frank and Pomp were convulsed with frantic laughter.

As for Jedediah, he was a wild man.

"Gol durn ther sassy picturs!" he roared. "If I git my paws onto 'em I'll rattle their bones. Hi, thar, yer leetle sarpins, throw down that hat!"

But the monkeys did not seem disposed to obey.

"Great ramrods!" blustered the Vermonter. "Jes' hold on till I git thar. I'll give yer suthin' tu larf at!"

But the monkeys kept up the circus with insane glee.

The hat was to them the greatest plaything they had gotten hold of for many a day.

Back and forth it went.

Their sharp little fingers clawing its surface and the contusions it received from contact with the branches was not doing that favorite dicer of the Yankee any good.

In despair Jedediah in turn, begged, threatened and coaxed the monkeys to restore his hat.

In vain; the little fellows were having too good a time, even had they been able to understand the Yankee's appeal.

Finally, Jedediah got raving mad.

"Gol durn ther keds skins!" he roared. "I'll smash the hull long out 'em!"

With this he began to climb the tree.

He was no sooner at the top than he

Up he went with wonderful agility, and soon had reached the upper branches.

But the monkeys only passed on to the next tree by making a swinging bridge, and were out of Jedediah's way.

All the baffled Yankee could do was to shake his fist at them impatiently.

"By thunder!" he shrieked. "If I cud only git a hip hold on yew chaps, I'd tost yew mighty quick."

Frank now recovered from his fit of mirth.

He began to fear that harm would come to the Yankee by falling from his perch in his great excitement.

So he cried:

"Hold on, Uncle Jed. Come down and I'll get your hat for you."

"Yew will?"

"Yes."

"Gosh durned if I see haow yew kin any better than me!"

"Well, come down and I'll show you."

"All right."

Down slid Jedediah from the tree. Frank picked up his gun and fired it in the air.

The stunning report had just the effect that Frank had calculated it would.

The monkeys were terrified, and dropped the hat, scrambling for a higher perch.

Frank picked it up and handed it to Jedediah.

The Yankee was dumbfounded.

"Waal, I swow!" he gasped. "I'd never hev thought of that."

"Your hat isn't much hurt," said Frank, "and you're lucky. It's a wonder they hadn't pulled it all to pieces."

"The sassy leetle brats!" exploded Jedediah. "I've a good mind to give them a taste of cold lead."

"Ugh! don't do that!" said Frank. "I would almost as soon shoot a defenseless human being. Ah—what is that?"

From the depths of the forest there came a tremendous roar.

There was a crashing of foliage, a shaking of the ground, and then through the undergrowth the giant form of a wild elephant was seen approaching.

The monster did not seem to be coming for our adventurers, however, so they stood firm.

But he kept on crashing through the forest at right angles to their position. He passed on quickly out of sight.

"Golly! I dun tink I wadn't want to git in dat animal's way!" cried Pomp. "He ain't jes' a bad one, he am."

"By gosh, I agree with yew!" cried Jedediah. "We will jes' give him a clean pass, I reckon."

Frank, however, was not intimidated with the appearance of the monster, and pressed forward deeper into the forest.

Beautiful, indeed, were the sights now revealed.

There were well beaten paths which our adventurers followed.

Lovely grottoes among the green foliage were discovered, mossy dells, cooling springs of water and sequestered spots, enticing enough for the gods.

There was something so grand and cathedral-like beneath the mighty trees that our adventurers were loath to depart from them.

Birds of the rarest plumage were abundant. Monkeys chattered, and all was life and animation.

But suddenly a sharp cry escaped Pomp's lips.

"Fo' de good Lor', Marse Frank, what am dat fink?"

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated and all felt a chill.

Certainly the spectacle was a most gruesome one.

A monster fully six feet in height had stepped from the undergrowth, and stood regarding the travelers with a positively devilish expression in its eyes.

In form it was closely allied to the human being.

Its shoulders were powerful, its arms reaching below its knees with bony fingers. Its legs were short and muscular, and its whole body was covered with hair.

The creature's physiognomy, however, was enough to give one the nightmare.

Description palls in an attempt to portray the expression of that brute face. The eyes were set deep and leering, the forehead contracted, the cheek bones high and angular, and long white tusks hung from the upper jaw.

"A gorilla!" gasped Frank.

Jedediah gazed at the beast in blank amazement.

"Waal, by Jingo!" he cried, "that is the wust lookin' specimen of a man I ever seen, I swar ter gosh if it ain't!"

"Golly! dat ain't a man, sah!" cried Pomp, "dat am a g'rilla!"

"Steady!" cried Frank. "We had better separate. That chap means to give us trouble."

The gorilla is never known to turn from an attack upon man.

He always regards him as an enemy, and will attack him on sight.

In the present case the gorilla seemed to be considering which one of his foes he would attack first.

His expression of countenance was something fiendish and well calculated to strike terror into the stoutest heart.

Frank retreated to the cover of a tree, and Pomp and Jedediah to another.

The gorilla carried in its hand a tremendous club.

It now gave a roar and gnashed its frightful teeth.

"Look out!" cried Frank.

The young inventor knew that it was a critical moment, and great care would need to be exercised.

The beast seemed to have singled out Frank as the object of its attack.

With long strides it started for the young inventor.

Frank waited but a moment.

He knew well what would be the result if the beast reached him.

It would mean death, for the gorilla's strength is greater than that of twenty white men.

Frank raised his Winchester and taking careful aim fired.

The gorilla staggered and gave a yell of pain, while a jet of blood spouted from its breast.

Yet the bullet had not reached a vital part, for the monster still came on to the attack.

At that moment Pomp fired.

The ball struck the animal's skull and bounded off harmlessly. The gorilla merely shook its head with a snarl.

Then Jedediah fired.

His bullet entered the animal's side and for a moment staggered it.

The gorilla had now nearly reached Frank Reade, Jr. The young inventor drew back and fired almost point blank.

This time the deadly Winchester proved too much for the most powerful of beasts.

The gorilla staggered and fell in a heap. It was dead instantly.

"Gosh all hemlock!" cried Jedediah, rushing out. "I reckon we've cooked his breakfast fer him. Ain't he a buster?"

"You are right, Uncle Jed," cried Frank. "I should hate to meet one of his ilk unarmed in this forest."

"Golly! I jes' reckon dat he wud eat a man right quick! Eh, Marse Frank?"

"I guess so," replied Frank. "We won't make close acquaintance with his kind just the same!"

The gorilla was closely examined.

He was a perfect monster, with muscles of prodigious size and as hard as iron.

Certainly he would be a bad customer to meet after dark. A Samson could not have matched him.

Frank heaved a sigh.

"I always dislike to shoot a gorilla," he said.

"Why?" asked Jedediah.

"They are so like a human being, but they have not the mind of a human person with which to work out their defense."

Frank shivered and turned away.

Of course, there had been no alternative but to kill the gorilla.

It would certainly have killed them if they had not.

But new adventures now caused them to quickly forget the incident.

Thus far they had seen nothing of human beings.

Frank did not doubt but that the locality was inhabited by natives. He had kept a lookout for signs of them.

In many cases the natives were friendly. But they were often treacherous and enemies.

He knew that it was in this vicinity that the dog-faced tribe were reputed to live.

Therefore he was anticipating meeting something of the sort at any moment.

Pomp and Jedediah were not.

Consequently they were the most surprised when suddenly from the depths of the forest there came a series of wild shouts, and half naked blacks were seen bounding toward them.

Jedediah turned to flee.

"Gol darn it, boys, thar they come!" he yelled. "I reckon we'd better git tow-ward 'em as quick as ever we can."

But Frank Reade, Jr., gave Pomp stern orders to stand.

CHAPTER VI.

A FRIENDLY TRIBE.

"Don't you move in your tracks, you black rascal!" he cried. "These natives may be friendly."

"Golly sakes, Marse Frank," cried Pomp, with chattering teeth, "what if dey am not?"

"We'll take the chances."

"Den dey kill us two jes' as quick as yo' ebber see."

"Bah! Stand your ground. Leave that to me."

Certainly the appearance of the oncoming natives was warlike enough.

They swarmed forward like bees, brandishing their javelins and yelling furiously. But this did not alarm Frank.

He was well acquainted with the ways of these natives.

He knew that they always approached in this hostile manner, and the mere fact that they did so was to him clear evidence of their friendship.

If they had really meant to attack they would have approached more cautiously.

So the plucky young inventor stood his ground.

On came the savages.

Frank raised his rifle and discharged it into the air. The effect was magical. Every negro went out of sight in an instant.

But in a few moments one was seen advancing with his hands raised palm outward.

This was a token of truce and Frank accepted it.

The fellow, a strapping African warrior, bearded and bedecked, made curious signs and then knelt before Frank.

The young inventor gathered from this that the tribe regarded him as their superior, and came to beg friendship.

Of course this was what Frank really wanted.

So he made a few comprehensive signs to the native and sent him back.

This it seemed had a good effect, for in a few moments the entire band of negroes, some fifty in number, came boldly out of cover.

Their chief, a powerfully built fellow, came up to Frank cordially.

He jabbered in an unintelligible way, and then in broken Portuguese, said:

"Mamby Loa, he great chief. Welcome white king to Mamby Land! So good!"

Frank knew the Portuguese language well, and replied:

"I am glad to meet you, King Loa. I will take your hand."

The Mamby chief leaped in the air with keen delight, and almost embraced Frank in his excitement.

"White man he talk Portuguese like Loa. All same. Bery good, me be white king's friend."

"I hope so!" said Frank, eagerly. "If you will stick by me, Loa, I will make you some good presents!"

The Mamby chief lifted his right hand, pointed to the earth, to the sky, and to the four points of the compass.

Then he lay flat upon his belly at Frank's feet, and groveled like a worm. After this puzzling series of antics he leaped up and placed his javelin at his throat, and said:

"Mamby Loa will be true to the white king. This is the oath!"

"Good!" replied Frank, with a smile; "but really, sir, your word would have been quite sufficient."

"It is death for a Mamby to break his oath," said Loa, solemnly.

"All right," said Frank, impatiently, "the bargain is made. What is to come next?"

"White king come to Mamby village. Eat meat with Loa. Have dance."

Frank looked up to see what time it was by the sun.

But that one of day was overcast, and there was no light.

However, it seemed quite early yet, so the young inventor turned to Pomp and Jedediah.

"The old fellow wants us to go to his village with him."

"Golly, Marse Frank," said Pomp, with a duck of his head, "I'se quite agreeable."

"Yew kin bet it will be heaps of fun," averred Jedediah, with a wink at Pomp. "I s'pose yew kin see yure ancestors here, eh?"

Pomp would have blushed had such a thing been possible. As it was, he shrugged his shoulders with disgust.

"Don' yo' go fo' to tell dis chile dat his ancestors was ebber like dem niggers. No, sah, don' believe it."

Frank laughed heartily at this.

"You don't claim kinship with them, eh, Pomp?"

"No, sah; I don't."

"Go easy now. Perhaps you may find some comely damsels up in King Loa's town to flirt with."

"No, sah!" protested Pomp, with dignity; "I don' flirt, sah—not a bit ob'it, sah!"

"Only on the sly," said the young inventor, with a laugh. "You're a sly rogue, Pomp."

The natives had from the first regarded Pomp with great curiosity.

They saw that he was of the same color as themselves, and took him for one of their race, in white men's clothes, which was literally a fact.

Therefore, they felt something of an affiliation, as it were, and during the march to the village one of them ventured to address Pomp.

Of course, the darky didn't understand their lingo.

Therefore, he said, caustically:

"I don' talk in yo' talk, gen'lemens. Don' know nuffin' 'bout what you'se sayin'."

"Be civil to your relations, Pomp," said Frank, with a laugh.

Pomp, however, would not do this.

"I don' associate wif no sich po' trash!" he declared, with umbrage. "I goes wif high-toned niggahs, I does."

The march to King Loa's town was two miles through the woods.

Suddenly the forest began to give way to a lovely little valley right down in the heart of the wild region.

It was a perfect Eden, and as they entered it, Frank exclaimed:

"I never saw the equal of this before. This must have been the home of Adam and Eve."

"It's a pooty lay of land!" agreed Jedediah, "but, law me! Yo oughter see Seth Hinks' farm up in Skattles. It'll keep ninety head of stock and cut ten ton of hay tew the acre, by gosh!"

Frank subsided with this.

The village of the Mamby tribe came into view.

It was a large collection of several hundred straw thatched huts.

As the king's party approached with their distinguished visitors, the inhabitants of the town rushed out in a body.

Women and children and men, many of them wholly naked, rushed out to meet the party.

Loud shouting and beating of drums followed.

But King Loa issued trumpet orders, and in a jiffy the whole concourse formed a square in the center of the town with the visitors and the king in the center.

Then a number of stout men lifted bodily the roof of a hut upon four upright posts, and placed it over them to shut out the hot rays of the sun.

Mats made of rushes were laid upon the ground.

Upon these the visitors sat.

The king's orders were given quick and sharp and instantly obeyed.

A buffalo calf was led forth and killed, and in a jiffy its carcass was dexterously dressed and cooking over a bed of hot coals.

King Loa sat upon a pile of mats and gave peremptory orders.

Drink was to the visitors in gourds, and presently men came up tugging heavy tusks of ivory, one of which was laid at the feet of each guest as a gift.

The drink was a peculiar kind of wine manufactured partly from the cocoanut, and was very refreshing.

Pomp took to it kindly, with the result that it made his tongue more glib than ever.

His opinion of the "pet" trash niggers began to undergo a decided change. They were now to his thinking "very fine gentlemen."

He had also been guilty of smirking and smiling at some of the more comely of the Maori women.

Jedediah was noncommittal, but he smacked his lips in a hearty manner after the rotation of the cocoanut wine.

It was evident that King Loa meant to do his utmost to entertain his guests.

While the calf was cooking over the fire, the native king called for his best dancers.

These were women, of simply form and minor feet.

A half dozen men with drums, kettle shaped, began to beat out a wild melody with a chanting song.

The women danced in a grotesque manner, to the edification of the spectators.

Then a troop of stalwart athletes came.

These performed some really fine ground and forty turning, quite equal to the foot of some of our best circus artists.

Feats of strength followed, and now came an exhibition

which intensely interested at least one member of the party.

This was Jedediah.

Two stalwart negroes, perfect giants in stature, appeared and engaged in wrestling.

The exhibition they gave was really fine.

The strength displayed was tremendous and the skill beyond dispute.

Jedediah watched them intently.

The one who came off victorious was so elated, that with the king's permission he challenged any other member of the tribe.

Of course, this did not apply to Jedediah. But when the Yankee saw that the challenge was likely to be unaccepted, he could stand it no longer.

He threw off his coat and cried:

"Gosh 'I blazes! I'd rather rastle than eat any time. I say, yew feller, if yer want to hev a go with me, say so!"

Jedediah leaped into the ring.

A sensation was created.

The black wrestler prostrated himself before the king. It was likely that matters would have become complicated had not Frank said in Portuguese to King Loa:

"He means a friendly bout with your subject, King Loa. Just a friendly wrestle."

The king's face changed and he seemed mightily pleased.

He bowed and smiled graciously, at the same time saying:

"It shall be as you say, white king. But your friend is not so strong!"

Frank smiled.

Jedediah indeed was vastly inferior in size to the black Samson.

But the young inventor knew well enough that the Yankee fully made up in skill and trickery what he lacked in weight.

"He is stronger than he looks, King Loa," he replied.

The black monarch nodded and smiled.

Jedediah stripped to the waist.

The black wrestler looked with disdain at his proportions. The Yankee seemed far outmatched.

"Wnat'll yew bet I dont throw him in five minnits. Mister Reade?" cried Jedediah.

"Well, I will wager a supper," replied Frank.

"By gosh, I'll take you," retorted the Yankee. "Keep yure eye pecked and put up or shut it!"

CHAPTER VII

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE CRUISER.

It is needless to say that the whole village of Maori was interested in the contest.

They crowded forward eagerly, all on the qui vive.

The two wrestlers took opposite corners of the ring.

Of course, rules did not apply. It was simply a question of the best man wins and "catch holds."

The black regarded his opponent warily a moment.

Jedediah made a feint, and the black deceived by it, made a rush.

Jedediah dodged under his powerful right arm, threw an arm across his back and in a twinkling had a back lock.

The black broke it the next moment, however, being fresh and strong, and caught Jedediah by the hips.

He partly raised the Yankee from the ground, but Jedediah saved himself by a shoulder hold.

The bones cracked and the sinews straightened in the bodies of both.

It was truly a battle of giants.

Jedediah's skill was marvelous.

In vain the big black tried to crush his lithe antagonist. Jedediah had a shoulder or hip hold always ready to save himself.

Thus the battle progressed.

Neither had yet been off their feet.

They broke loose now, and once more retreated to their corners to make a new rush.

The black had by this time come to the conclusion that he was dealing with no ordinary man.

He evidently realized that he had quite a battle before him.

His appearance showed this.

He was perspiring like a beaver, and breathing quite heavily.

Jedediah, on the other hand, was as calm and cool as could be imagined.

The Yankee drew a plug of tobacco from his hip pocket and bit off a prodigious hunk.

Working his jaws upon this, he winked at Frank, and said:

"Yure bet is lost, Mister Reade. I'm going to throw him this time."

"On my word, I believe he will," muttered Frank.

This time the black stood upon the defensive.

In vain Jedediah tried to coax him out of his corner.

Then, realizing that he was giving his man too much of a rest, Jedediah made a rush for him.

The darky cleverly picked the Yankee up by the hips, and only a clever shoulder hold saved him.

But Jedediah's tactics now were of the aggressive kind.

He gave his man no rest.

Feint after feint, trick after trick, was employed, until the big black was puffing like a steam engine.

His opponent was so slippery that he was utterly unable to do anything with him.

As for Jedediah, he worked with the ardor of one who has the certainty of winning.

Suddenly his opportunity came.

The big black's back weakened. In a moment Jedediah's giant grasp was upon his hips.

The Yankee's powerful hands were like a vise. His own hip caught the black's body, and the next moment, like a falling mountain, down went the black champion.

So heavily was he thrown that he lay for a moment like one stunned.

Such a yell as went up from the spectators.

Jedediah modestly picked up his coat and shirt, and began to don them.

King Loa was intensely excited.

"Your man is a great wrestler," he said to Frank, enthusiastically. "He shall be rewarded!"

"Uncle Jed, I am proud of you!" cried Frank, as Jedediah joined him.

"Waal, I reckon old Varmount is ahead in the rastling line," said Jedediah, modestly.

"You are right," agreed Frank, "if there are any more there like you."

The broiled calf was now brought forward, and the feast began.

After this there was more dancing, and then Frank saw that the sun was getting low.

"We must return to our ship, King Loa," he said.

"What is that?" asked the King, somewhat puzzled.

"We have a ship which flies in the air like the eagle or the hawk."

The king looked incredulous.

"I have never seen anything of the kind," he said. "Your people have come to the coast in great winged canoes, but they don't sail in the air."

"But mine does," declared Frank. "If you will return with me, I will show you."

The king seemed pleased.

"Will not the white king bring his winged boat here?" he asked.

"I will," replied Frank, "in the morning."

"It is well," replied King Loa.

Frank had turned to go, when a thought came to him.

Instantly he turned to the native king and asked:

"King Loa, in all this region, have you ever heard of a race of men who have faces shaped like a dog's?"

The king's face lit up.

"Nautchi Mha," he said.

"What?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"Nautchi Mba, the men with the dog faces. Yes, they are our foes."

King Loa then proceeded to give Frank valuable information as regarded the dog-faced men.

His description was most graphic and interesting.

According to it the Nautchi Mba or dog-faced men were a frightful race of cannibals and wild men.

They were the deadly enemies of all other tribes, and in their raids carried all before them.

In battle they were fierce and invincible. Of all the savages in Central Africa they were by far the most blood-thirsty.

Frank listened to this description with deepest interest.

According to King Loa's declaration the Mamby village was even now threatened by an attack from the Nautchi Mba.

The king was much worried about it, and feared that the wretches would sweep his little band out of existence.

Frank's sympathy was aroused.

"They shall not do it," he declared.

"How can it be helped?" asked Loa.

"I will help it."

The king shook his head sadly.

"Everything falls before the Nautchi Mba!" he declared; "they are not afraid of the white man's fire-sticks. They stop for nothing and fight like wolves with their teeth as well as weapons!"

Frank could not help a shiver at this terse description.

The Nautchi Mba would surely be a terrible foe to meet.

But he knew well that with the help of his electric weapons and the dynamite gun that he could worst them.

"Fear not, King Loa!" he said, reassuringly, "I will help you!"

"If the white king helps Loa to punish the Nautchi Mba, he will never forget it," declared the monarch.

"I will do it," affirmed Frank. "When do you expect another attack?"

"By another rising of the sun."

"I will be on hand with my air-ship before the rising of the sun," said Frank.

The king bowed low.

Then Frank turned and said to Pomp and Jedediah:

"Come, let us return to the air-ship."

King Loa furnished a bodyguard to escort them back through the forest.

It did not take very long to cover the return trail.

Very soon the deep forest was left, and the party came out into the open country.

Here the king's guard left them.

Without delay, the three explorers started for the White Cruiser.

Its runways were just visible over a rise of land, so they knew that it was still where they had left it.

But at this moment a thrilling incident happened.

Distant rifle shots were heard, and then the air-ship was seen to leap into the air.

"Barney has been attacked!" cried Frank, in alarm.

"Fo' de Lor's sakes, Marse Frank! Am it de dog-faced men?"

"By gosh, yew have hit it!" roared Jedediah. "Look yonder!"

Sure enough, the dog-faced men had attacked the air-ship.

And now from the cover of a clump of palms a gang of them were seen rushing toward our adventurers.

For a moment our friends were utterly paralyzed.

The appearance of the strange barbarians was something frightful.

They were literal giants in frame and statue, with long, black hair, covering head and face and the upper part of the body.

Their heads were of an abnormal size, seeming as large as those of lions, and they carried huge spears and battle clubs.

Frank Reade, Jr., threw back the harness of his rifle.

"Stand firm, boys!" he cried. "We have got to have a fight with them!"

But there seemed a legion of the brutes.

To attempt to cope successfully with them seemed impossible. The fate of our adventurers seemed sealed.

A hand-to-hand conflict with the Nautchi Mba in such numbers as they were was little short of suicidal.

But Frank looked up to see where the air-ship was.

To his joy he saw the White Cruiser descending toward them, and Barney at the rail letting down a long rope ladder.

This fell at their feet.

In a moment Frank grasped it, crying:

"Come, boys, get hold here! It is our only hope!"

The dog-faced men were coming down the slope like a whirlwind.

Jedediah sprang up on the ladder. Pomp followed him.

Then Barney sent the air-ship skyward.

Up from the ground, clinging to the rope ladder, went the three men. It was a narrow escape.

A moment later and the dog-faced men were beneath them.

The barbarians began throwing their javelins up after them.

But they were far beyond range.

"We have nothing to fear," cried Frank. "We are saved!"

Up the rope ladder they climbed then, and a few moments later were aboard the White Cruiser.

Barney welcomed them with joy.

"Shure, sor," he cried, in explaining it to Frank. "I saw the barbarians coming and I up an' give thim a shot, bad cess to thim. Then I was afraid they wud come aboard, so I sint the air-ship up."

"You did just right, Barney," said Frank, approvingly. "To-morrow we will give them a lesson."

All looked forward to the morrow with thrilled anticipations.

CHAPTER VIII.

BATTLING THE NAUTCHI MBA.

Frank was determined that no harm should come to the Mamby tribe if he could help it.

His liking for King Loa was most profound, and he was determined to defend him against his barbarous foe.

He knew that it was not at all improbable but that the dog-faced men might wipe out the peaceable Mambies entirely.

"I will teach the beasts a lesson they will never forget!" muttered the young inventor with set lips.

Darkness was now fast coming on.

Frank knew that nothing more could be done that night, so he set an anchor out and allowed the air-ship to remain where it was.

The White Cruiser rocked at her anchor all that night.

The next morning all were up at sunrise.

Pomp prepared an appetizing meal, and then Frank boasted and ate.

Nothing was to be seen of the Nautchi Mba in the vicinity.

But as the White Cruiser sailed over the dark forest a startling scene was suddenly revealed.

Across an open space below a perfect band of the Nautchi Mba were seen to be marching.

They were proceeding in the direction of the Mamby Mba, doubtless with the purpose of attacking it.

Frank realized that there was no time to lose.

If he was to give his friends, the Mambies, aid, it must be done at once.

So he set the White Cruiser forward at full speed.

Over the dark forest the air-ship passed.

Floating over the barbarians Frank was surprised to ob-

serve that they did not regard it with the usual fear and aversion.

Instead they brandished their weapons at it in a threatening manner.

Then the young inventor recalled the declaration of King Loa, that the Nautchi Mba were afraid of nothing, either in the flesh or the spirit.

The young inventor compressed his lips in a determined manner.

"We will see," he muttered.

The temptation was too great, and he notified Barney to slow the ship a moment.

Then Frank took one of the explosive projectiles and dropped it over the rail.

It struck fairly in the midst of the clearing.

The effect was frightful.

Earth and debris and mangled bodies of the dog-faced men filled the air.

A mound was raised in the clearing composed of these substances.

But even this did not seem to terrify the barbarians.

They yelled all the louder and brandished their weapons with more fierceness than ever.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Frank, in amazement; "those are the nerviest beings I ever saw."

The Nautchi Mba were certainly wholly without fear.

There was no denying this.

The White Cruiser now kept on for a couple of miles.

It now hung directly over the village of the Mambies.

The conduct of these natives was in strong contrast with that of the dog-faced men.

They prostrated themselves upon the ground in superstitious fear.

They evidently regarded Frank Reade, Jr., as a god, and his air-ship as a cloud upon which he came down to the earth.

The young inventor alighted from the air-ship as soon as it touched the ground.

It required some effort to reassure the natives and overcome their superstitious fear.

But this was finally done, and then Frank induced King Loa to go aboard the White Cruiser.

The air-ship was indeed an object of mighty wonder to the native king.

Frank showed him the electrical machinery and tried to explain it all to him.

But King Loa shook his head and tapped his forehead.

"Me no see it," he said. "Head no think it not like white man."

King Loa was wonderfully taken with the rich appointments of the saloon.

Frank gave him a couch and one of the satin chairs for a throne.

From that moment Frank owned the heart of the Mamby monarch.

The young inventor also distributed simple gifts among the natives in common.

But it was not forgotten that great danger threatened.

Frank told King Loa of the approach of the dog-faced men.

The native king now showed that he was a man of spirit and pluck.

He called his fighting men together and put them in shape in a masterly fashion.

As nearly as possible, the town was put in a condition suitable for defense.

But Frank Reade, Jr., took a wire, and with Barney and Pomp's aid stretched it from tree to tree around the entire village.

Then he warned the Mambies not to touch it.

It was heavily charged from the dynamos, and thus prepared the oncoming of the Nautchi Mba was awaited.

The Mambies were under arms.

It was determined to make a desperate fight.

The Mambies had been assured of Frank Reade, Jr.'s, assistance, and not being familiar with his resources, their faith that he would keep his promise was of the blind order.

As for the young inventor, he smiled as he thought of the reception he had planned for the rascally Nautchi.

Soon scouts began to come in with reports that the enemy were coming.

Their distant shouts and cries, like the hoarse barking of dogs, could be plainly heard.

To the Mambies it was a terrifying sound.

The Mamby skirmishers were quickly driven in by the approaching foe.

It would certainly have been the annihilation of the Mambies that day had it not been for Frank Reade, Jr.

Not one of them would have lived to tell of the fight afterward.

But the deadly Nautchi Mba had a foe to encounter whose prowess and power was little known to them.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp and Jedediah were all in the turret forward, keeping a sharp lookout.

They were all armed with Winchester's and had plenty of ammunition.

Suddenly the Mambies were seen to retreat to the cover of their stockade.

"They are coming!" cried Frank.

This was true.

The woods seemed suddenly full of Nautchi Mba.

They came in a perfect swarm, yelling and howling savagely. They tried to rush upon the Mamby village.

But the first obstacle they encountered was the deadly electric wire, and it was quickly broken. Yet contact with it was costly to them until they learned to avoid it.

Barbarians of a more superstitious and less brutish cast would have been terrified by the unseen foe.

But the Nautchi Mba were so brutish and ignorant as to not even know any fear in any form.

Once started, nothing but death could check them, unless actually cut to pieces and beaten back.

Frank and Barney and Pomp and Jedediah at first made use of their Winchester's.

But these were speedily found to be not sufficient.

The Mambies were valorously defending the opposite side of the village.

Frank cried to Barney and Pomp:

"Bring projectiles! Lively!"

They were brought.

Frank trained the pneumatic gun and thrust a projectile into the breach.

He drew the electric hammer and sent the air chamber forward. There was a dull shock followed by a terrific explosion.

The dynamite projectile had struck in the midst of a hundred of the Nautchi.

In a twinkling they were literally blown to fragments.

A path was mowed through the attacking column.

Again and again the deadly gun was worked.

A literal fortification was being raised around the Mamby village by the explosion.

The Mamby natives themselves were so terrified that they were compelled to retreat to their huts.

This left the White Cruiser to fight the enemy alone.

But it was equal to the occasion.

The Nautchi could not possibly stand before such terrific explosions.

In spite of their bull-dog grit and famous recklessness, they were really obliged to fall back.

Nothing human could hope to stand before those awful projectiles.

A line of heaped up earth fully four feet high extended along one side of the village.

Slowly but persistently the Nautchi were driven back.

When they did break up and retreat, though, it was an inglorious one.

Nothing could stand before them.

In a short time they had left the vicinity and the battle was over.

It was a mighty victory and a terrible repulse to the Nautchi Mba.

The Mambies ventured to crawl out of their huts when the awful cannonade ceased.

They were the picture of abject fear, and at that moment Frank Reade, Jr., had perfect domain over them.

They could not but regard the young inventor as a being of a higher sphere and allied to the gods.

The scene about the Mamby village was a terrible one to behold.

The ground was heaped with mangled Nautchi Mbas and the trunks and branches of trees riddled by the dynamite.

"Gosh all hemlock!" exclaimed Jedediah, when all was over. "I don't see, Mister Reade, why you couldn't lick Uncle Sam's navy, if yew wuz a mind tew."

"If I could keep out of the way of Uncle Sam's long range guns, I think I could," replied Frank.

The Nautchi Mbas had been ingloriously driven from the field.

They did not return to the attack, and the victory could be safely said to belong to Frank Reade, Jr.

King Loa came forward and prostrated himself at Frank's feet.

"Oh, mighty white king!" he cried, "what have I done that I should have deserved such kind treatment at your hands? You have saved my people!"

"King Loa," replied Frank in Portuguese, "I never yet refused to champion the cause of the weak and the right. That was your claim upon me."

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNFORTUNATE EXPEDITION.

After the repulse of the Nautchi Mba, the voyagers of the *White Cruiser* visited the Mamby village.

Everything was done by King and people to entertain them.

Fests were given, fetes were made and great hunting parties organized.

These were all kindly enjoyed by our adventurers.

Penny allied greatly with his colored brethren.

Banjo was enamored of the peculiar drink manufactured by the natives, and Jedediah was fond of wrestling with the natives.

Frank and King Loa were quite chummy, and the young

inventor was interested in the king's plans for the betterment of his people.

The young inventor taught the natives many useful arts, made them valuable gifts and encouraged traits of industry.

But one day a sensation was created.

A native came into the village bearing what he regarded as a curious yellow stone.

Its color and beauty had attracted his eye, and he thought of it only as a gift to the great white king.

He cast it Frank's feet, at the same time making a little presentation speech, which was hardly intelligible.

The moment Frank's gaze rested upon it, however, he gave a mighty start.

He picked it up and scanned it eagerly.

There was no deceiving him.

His practiced eye read the truth.

It was gold.

A huge nugget of it, worth fully two thousand dollars in any civilized country, worth nothing to the untutored native.

Frank was excited.

He called one of the natives, who spoke Portuguese, to act as an interpreter.

Many of the natives had acquired a smattering of this tongue from the legions of Spanish traders who passed among them.

"Where did you get this?" asked Frank, through the interpreter.

"Far north in the mountains," was the reply, "from the back of the elephant."

Frank was puzzled.

"How do you get stones like this from an elephant's back?"

"Ah!" replied the interpreter, "it is a huge stone like this which is shaped like an elephant."

Frank was astounded.

"An elephant of gold," he muttered; "that it too wonderful for belief."

The result was natural.

An expedition was planned to visit the elephant of gold.

Frank believed firmly that he was the discoverer of one of the most wonderful gold mines in the world.

The Mambies were only too delighted with the idea of the expedition.

They had no idea of the value of gold.

It was decided to make the trip overland, using *canoes* to ferry the rivers and a broad lake.

There was some little risk in all this, but Frank was so sure that they could protect themselves with their *White Cruiser*

It was not believed that the Nautchi Mba would venture another attack.

It was decided to leave Pomp with the White Cruiser.

This suited the darky well, for he made many cronies among the natives.

Jedediah and Barney, on the other hand, were glad to be the favored companions of Frank on his hunt for gold.

The king, of course, could not leave the village.

But he sent his eldest son, Prince Muda Zan, a bright and intelligent young fellow.

Thus equipped the party, one hundred in number, set out.

The journey was through a forest more dense than any yet seen.

The light of the sun was excluded, and the gloom in places was almost like that of night.

At night they camped in the forest or the jungle, and were besieged by pestiferous flies and insects.

Yet the wonderful sights and discoveries more than repaid Frank for all this discomfort.

Jedediah was hearty and happy, and, with Barney, made things lively.

The Celt had his inevitable fiddle with him, and at night when camp was made he furnished rare enjoyment for the natives, who danced nimbly to his cleverly played jigs.

No incident worthy of note befell the adventurers until they came to a wide river, which was claimed to be a tributary to the Congo.

Here the canoes were launched and preparations made for ferrying across the river.

The banks were thickly grown up with reeds and grasses.

Just below there were a series of swift rapids.

But, though the current was swift, the light canoes of the Mambies could easily float upon it.

The first canoe load crossed all safely.

In the next was Frank Reade, Jr.

The young inventor sat in the stern of the craft, and four Mambies manipulated the paddles.

All told, there were nine in the canoe.

But they had hardly emerged from the reeds when one of the natives raised his paddle with an exclamation.

There was a tremendous agitation of the water not far distant, and then up into view rose the snout and hideous head of a hippopotamus.

There were others of the tribe in the reeds, and they answered the monster's call.

Frank, at sight of the beast, was tempted to take a shot at it.

He raised his rifle with the purpose in mind.

But as he sighted the rifle he was surprised at the action of the natives.

They ceased rowing and began making frantic motions for him to desist.

The young inventor could not understand this.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked, testily.

He ascribed the aversion of the natives to shooting the hippopotamus to cowardice.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, "what are you afraid of?"

Then he raised his rifle and fired at the beast.

The bullet struck the monster fairly over the eye.

It, of course, failed to penetrate the skull.

The beast gave a loud roar of pain and anger, and disappeared beneath the surface.

The natives, terrified, began to paddle swiftly for the shore.

They uttered alarmed cries and seemed in desperate fear.

Frank was not a little disconcerted at his failure to hit the beast in a vital part.

Now he saw at once the cause of the alarm of the natives.

There was an upheaval of the water just behind the canoe.

Loud yells of terror escaped the natives as the hippopotamus was seen to arise.

Frank drew aim at the monster and fired.

But the beast's huge jaws struck the canoe. In a moment over it went.

The occupants were struggling in the swift current.

Down toward the cascade they were drawn. Frank Reade, Jr., saw too late what would be the result of his folly.

He was a strong swimmer.

But he could not breast that powerful current.

Down toward the cataract he was swept. He saw that he must surely go over it.

This seemed certain death.

An awful horror came over the young inventor—a sense of suffocation.

Must he die in this awful manner? Must this be the ending of his brilliant career?

Truly it was an awful thought.

But he had not time to think of more when he was swept into the current and the next moment went from sight.

Barney and Jedediah upon the shore were crazy at the sight.

"Och hone, Mither Frank is killed intoirely!" cried Barney, frantically. "Shure, I'll niver see him drown that way!"

The devoted Irishman would have jumped into the river. But Jedediah and several of the natives held him back. Frank had gone on all night almost without

The waters had apparently closed over him for good.

It did not seem possible that he could be saved.

The series of cataracts were fearful in height, though not **very** steep. Yet it did not seem possible that a human being could go over them and survive.

But those on shore were not disposed to remain inactive.

Jedediah was the first to recover his senses.

He started along through the reeds upon the river bank.

His purpose was to learn, if possible, if Frank had really survived the fall over the cataract.

"Gosh all hominy!" exclaimed the excited Yankee, as he tore his way through the reeds. "I reckon we'll resky him if it's a possible thing fer us to do!"

"Och hone, I'll niver see Mither Frank again, rist his sowl!" wailed Barney. "Shure it's kilt he is, an' that's the ind av him!"

It required some time for the party to make their way through the reeds to a position below the falls.

But they arrived there finally.

No sign of the young inventor, however, was to be seen.

Only the mighty boiling waste of waters and not a human form visible upon them.

It was evident that the canoe had gone to destruction. Not one of them seemed to have survived.

The hippopotamus had certainly had ample revenge for his injury.

Sorrowfully the party wandered up and down the banks of the river looking for the bodies of the victims.

These did not at once appear. After a time, however, three of the natives were found half a mile below.

Their bodies were battered fearfully by contact with the jagged rocks.

These were all that were found, however.

Frank Reade, Jr., and the others, it was assumed, had been caught in some eddy, or were sunk at the bottom of some pool.

"Begorra, I'll niver go back without Mither Frank, dead or alive!" declared Barney, rigidly. "Shure I'll die in the attempt to find him."

"Don't be a fule, Irish!" exploded Jedediah. "If we found his body we cudn't take it home, I reckon."

"Be jabbers, I'd know whether he's dead or not," retorted Barney. "An' shure I don't know that now at all!"

The natives were lamenting the loss of their comrades.

~~They were, however, in favor of giving them up and resuming their journey.~~ Barney, objected vigorously, however, and this was the case in dispute when a cry of alarm arose.

Still upon a point of land some distance below a member of the dreaded Nautchi Mba appeared.

CHAPTER X.

BRAVE LION HUNTERS.

The dog-faced men saw the Mamby warriors at once.

They set up a howl instantly and started to attack them.

Self preservation is ever nature's first law, and in face of this deadly peril Barney for a moment forgot his grief.

"Bejabbers, wud yez luk at the blatherskites!" he cried, excitedly. "Shure it'll niver do to lave thim catch us this way!"

"Gol durn me fer a calf!" roared Jedediah, "I'll give one of the pizen sarpints his dose, ye kin bet!"

The Yankee's rifle spoke.

One of the dog-faced men fell.

But this shot only had the effect of increasing the wrath and fury of the other barbarians.

They came on now like a pack of howling wolves.

Muda Zan, the young prince, was the only one of the Mamby natives to hold his senses.

The king's son was really a lad of great pluck.

He brandished his javelin and shouted encouragingly to his men:

"Men of Loa, be brave. You have faced the Nautchi Mba before and you can meet them now. They do not outnumber us, and we can meet them. Remember that your king calls for your lives."

The warriors could not resist this appeal.

They recovered from their panic, and in an orderly manner retreated to the canoe landing.

Here Barney and Jedediah opened fire upon the barbarians.

Volley after volley were given them.

The Nautchi Mba seemed to have acquired a wholesome respect for the deadly and mysterious fire-sticks of the white men.

They were held for a time in check, and sought hiding in the reeds.

Thus the battle was kept up for a long time.

Finally a place was found in a rocky grotto, where our friends were enabled to make a firm stand.

Here they held the Nautchi at bay.

But, now that the fighting had become easier, the Mamby warriors began to complain.

It was not without reason, either.

Prince Muda Zan came to Barney, and said:

"My men want to go back to their home. The white king is dead, and we cannot go further."

"Begorra, I don't want yez to go funder!" cried Barney.

excitedly. "Shure, I only want me dear frien's body to take back with me to America. Bad cess to this unhowly land!"

"The white king is dead," said the young prince, firmly. "His body will never be found."

"It's a loiar yez are!" cried Barney, furiously. "Shure yez eud foind it av yez wud only look the while."

The Celt's grief and despair was something terrible to depict.

But it seemed to be all of no avail.

The Mambies were firm in their resolution to go back, and no argument would induce them to depart from it.

Jedediah finally joined forces with them and argued:

"Dodgast it, Irish, don't yew see that 'tain't no manner of use tew stay hyar any longer? Mister Reade is gone, an' gol durned if I ain't goin' back! We'll be jinin' him, tew, if we don't git out of hyar pooty quick."

Not until Barney was fully convinced that Frank Reade, Jr., had really gone to his death would he agree to this.

But the pressure was such that he finally yielded.

"Shure the whole counthry will mourn over Mither Frank!" he cried. "It's a foine gintleman he was, to be shure, and niver the loikes av him will I see agin!"

Forty-eight hours after Frank's disappearance in the cataract the exploring party were once more under way.

But this time they journeyed toward home a sad party to be sure.

The Nautchi Mba seemed to have given up the attack, for nothing was seen of them.

Barney was least reconciled of any to the situation.

"Shure Mither Frank can't be dead!" he would assert. "I'll niver belave it until I see his dead body!"

A strong resolve had taken possession of the Celt.

"Shure I'll moighty soon come back!" he declared: "the naygur an' meself will come back with the air-ship, an' we'll niver leave until we find Mither Frank!"

After this Barney could not push forward fast enough.

Through the wilderness the little party struggled on.

The perils which beset their path were innumerable.

Not only were they harassed by prowling bands of Nautchi, but poisonous reptiles and wild beasts were continually cutting off members of the band.

They kept on heroically, however, until the native guide announced that they were not twenty miles from King Lea's village.

This was a joyous announcement, and the depressed spirits of all arose.

But almost instantly after an incident occurred which came near costing the lives of several of the party.

Barney, who was in advance and the most eager of any

to reach the Mamby village, caught a sudden yellow gleam through the underbrush, just ahead.

The next moment a tremendous roar broke the stillness of the forest.

A monster African lion, with shaggy mane and lashing tail, appeared to view.

The Mambies instantly scattered in terror.

But Barney only came to a halt.

The Celt was not in a frame of mind to brook opposition.

The lion was directly in his path, and this irritated him immensely.

"Bad luck to the beast!" he cried in an exasperated manner. "Wud yez have the civility to get out of me path?"

But the lion did not seem disposed to heed the request.

He held his place, growling savagely.

A prudent man would have at once yielded the royal beast the right of way.

But a lion is said to be to an Irishman what a red rag is to a bull. It may be possible that this was why Barney stood his ground.

However it was, the Celt would not budge.

"Wud yez have the good sinse an' respect to get out av me path?" he cried, slipping a cartridge into the breech of his rifle.

The very audacity of the intrepid Irishman may have been what restrained the lion.

However this was, the king of beasts did not at once make an aggressive move.

"Gosh!" cried Jedediah, "don't yew know enuff tew come in out of the rain, Irish? Yew'll git hurt if yew stay thar!"

"Begorra, I've no toime to waste wid lions an' sich loike!" expostulated Barney. "Get out av me way, ye pizen-looking beast, or I'll blow daylight through ye!"

The lion crouched as if for a spring, and let out a tremendous roar.

The Celt fearlessly raised his rifle and blazed away.

Barney was a good shot, and he had taken care to take good, careful aim at the beast's eye.

As luck had it the shot went true to its mark.

The bullet struck the lion full in the eye.

It plowed its way into the beast's brain, and just as it took the spring life became extinct, and the beast fell in a heap.

A great shout went up from the Mamby warriors.

They all came rushing forward now with great enthusiasm.

To them it was a most marvellous shot, and Barney was the king of hunters.

Such prowess was to them a wonder.

Chattering like a gang of monkeys they gathered about the dead body of the lion.

One or two of them pulled out knives and began to flay the animal. Jedediah slapped Barney on the back.

"B'gosh, ye did that handsome, old pard!" he cried, jocularly. "I'll be gol durned if I'd hev faced thet tiger fer any amount o' money."

"Begorra, I don't know what iver made me do it!" acknowledged Barney. "Shure, it was only a foolish thrick fer any one."

This was certainly a truthful statement.

"But yew got thar!" said Jedediah.

"Be jabbers, I always do that same," retorted Barney. "It's an old lion hunter I am, an' no mistake about it!"

The words had hardly left his mouth when a terrible sequel came.

A number of the Mamby natives were busily engaged in skinning the lion.

It had been suspected that the lion's mate was in the vicinity.

Suddenly a loud cry of terror went up, the Mambies scattered, a terrific roar awoke the forest echoes, and a long, yellow body came flying through space.

One of the Mamby warriors was crushed by the attacking lion's paw.

Another was torn open by the terrible claws, and a third had the savage beast's jaw fastened in his body.

So sudden had been the attack of the second lion that all were quite unprepared for it.

Two of the Mamby warriors had been instantly killed.

The third could not hope to be rescued.

The avenging mate of the dead lion stood in the center of the glade over his dead mate's body.

In his powerful jaws was the body of the dying Mamby warrior.

It was a terrible picture.

"Hivins an' earth!" screamed Barney, "wud yez luk at thet dhr!"

Then up went the Irishman's rifle.

Crack!

The bullet struck the lion beyond doubt, but it might have been a paper pellet for all the effect that it had.

The lion let out another terrible roar, and his teeth went crunching through the bones of his victim.

It was now Jedediah's turn.

The Yankee was no slouch with a rifle.

At home he had hunted partridge and woodcock and wild ducks—never such big game as lions, of course.

But hard hunting is the test of training for the eye and aim.

Jedediah took cool and careful aim for the beast's side, just back of the shoulder.

He hoped to reach the heart, and by this one shot to terminate the animal's existence at once.

The Yankee's scheme proved a good one and successful.

The bullet went true to the mark.

The lion reared upon its hind legs, tried to claw the air and then sank in a quivering mass upon the ground.

He was dead instantly.

A great cry went up from the Mamby warriors. They rushed forward and tenderly picked up the remains of their dead companions.

It was a victory for Jedediah.

He was now even with Barney.

"Begorra, sor," said the Celt, shaking hands with Uncle Jed, "ye've hunted lions yesilf, I take it. Maybe yez have lots av thim in your State av Vermont?"

"Naow, not quite so bad as thet," protested Jedediah. "We don't have lions, but I've seen ther time when yew could bag deer an' panther an' bear up in ther old Green Mountings. We air even up, now, Irish!"

"Begorra, we are!" agreed Barney, "an' I'll threat to whiskey at ther fust tavern we meet!"

CHAPTER XL.

FRANK'S ADVENTURES.

The disappearance of Frank Reade, Jr., over the cataract of the African river was certainly a terrible incident, and well warranted the belief of his companions that he had gone to his death.

That he really had not, though, we will quickly show.

Fate had not ordained that our young inventor should be thus so untimely cut off just at the most proper time in his wonderful career.

His life was spared, and by what seemed certainly like a virtual miracle.

There was nothing to prevent his going over the cataract.

Over the edge he did go, and down like a shot to the depths below.

He struck with mighty force upon the jagged rocks along the course of the cataract, and was bruised and stunned.

Yet as his body was caught and whirled into a little pool under the falls, he had sufficient presence of mind to make an effort to swim.

This doubtless saved his life.

It prevented his being further carried down the current.

Moreover, at this juncture his body was caught in a current and swept under the heavy fall of water, and the next moment he was clinging to a rocky ledge directly under the falling sheet.

Dazed and bewildered he crept upon this, and for a moment lay there.

Presently, however, his senses began to return, and he became cognizant of all about him.

His position was a peculiar one.

The din of the waters, which seemed falling all about him, was terrific.

He was clinging to a narrow ledge of rock.

Before him was the mighty sheet of the cataract. Tons and hundreds of tons of water were falling into the pool under him.

He dared not return to it.

Certain death would seem to be the result.

What was to be done?

Frank turned completely about.

He was given a surprise.

Directly at his back was what seemed like a veritable cave under the waterfall.

It was hollowed out of the solid rock, and looked as if at one time water had gushed through it.

Where it led to Frank could not even guess.

But it seemed to afford a possible avenue of escape.

Therefore, the young inventor took it.

He crept into the cavern, and for some way followed it through a tortuous course.

Water dripped down from the roof above, and the walls shook with the thunder of the cataract.

Frank kept on until the cavern widened and became drier, and the roar of the water became less distinct.

A great hope now seized the young inventor.

He believed that it was going to be possible for him to make his escape from the place.

Cheered with this reflection, he kept on.

How long he continued his course he could never tell.

It seemed years, and was doubtless a number of hours, when suddenly the cavern began to take on an upward trend.

A few moments later a gleam of daylight showed ahead.

Then he crept out actually into the open air and daylight.

He saw that the cavern had certainly been the course of an underground stream, and that at high water it was apt to become such at any time, for he came out into the stony bed of a dry river.

The banks of this dry watercourse were lined with tall trees.

Frank crept among them, and finding a soft, mossy spot sank down.

He was quite fatigued and slept soundly.

How long he slept he could not say, but when he awoke all was darkness about him.

He heard rustling sounds in the bushes, and saw gleaming eyeballs and heard the snap of teeth.

He knew that he had awoke just in time.

A prowling band of wolves had scented him and now surrounded him.

There was no time to lose.

He regained his feet with an effort, and grasping the branch of a tree drew himself up to a position of safety.

Here he remained until the rest of the night wore away.

Frank now keenly regretted that he had not been able to rejoin or signal his companions the day before.

But his exhausted condition had forbade this.

He fell to wondering where they were, and if they had given him up for lost.

What would be his fate should they abandon the quest for him?

In that mighty wilderness without a guide his position would be a desperate one indeed.

There would be scant chance of his ever getting out of the region alive.

All manner of depressing thoughts flashed across Frank's brain.

But pluck was one of his chief characteristics, and he would not abandon it.

With the coming of daylight the wolves disappeared.

No other being in sight, Frank ventured to descend from the tree.

He at once set out in the direction which he believed would bring him to the river.

At intervals he gave signals with a whistle, with which Barney was well familiar.

But if the signal was heard it was not answered.

For hours Frank struggled on through the wilds.

Once he avoided conflict with a tiger. Twice he evaded hyenas and kept on bravely.

But no river came in sight, nor no cheering sound from comrades.

Then the awful realization dawned upon him. He was lost!

Lost in the African wilds.

A more horrible thing could hardly be conceived. Hundreds of miles of unexplored territory were upon every hand.

Dangers innumerable beset his path.

Certainly he could never hope to evade them all. It was a stupendous thing to contemplate. Horror and despair dwelt supreme in the young inventor's breast.

Everywhere he turned—all was the same wilderness.

But the climax came.

Crushing his way through a copse he heard a snarling sound behind him.

Then he felt a giant clutch upon his arm and sharp teeth pierced his shoulder.

He turned to be rewarded with an awful spectacle.

He was in the clutches of half a dozen of the dreaded Nautchi Mba.

Resistance was useless.

Their hideous, animal-like features were contorted with delight and savage exultation.

"My God!" screamed Frank, in the agony of awful despair. "I am lost!"

But his captors, strangely enough, did not seek to take his life.

Instead, they threw him upon the ground and instantly bound his limbs with bits of vines.

They chattered and barked and howled in their maudlin joy.

Frank saw at once that they were far nearer the beast than the human being.

He was lifted bodily between them and carried away through the forest.

For something like a mile he was carried in this manner.

Then they came to a mighty clearing in the primeval forest, with a floor carpeted with rich mosses.

Here a wonderful scene was revealed.

Houses, or rather huts, made of stone were here in abundance, and Frank saw that this was a Nautchi village.

His captors now set him upon his feet.

There were fully a hundred men and women in the Nautchi village, the latter being dressed in the robes of lion and bear skins.

A great sensation was created by the appearance of the prisoner and his captors.

The Nautchi women set up a wild, weird kind of song, and danced about the prisoner.

Then a giant-framed Nautchi, evidently the chief of the tribe, appeared. He was possessed of a head which, with its mass of hair, seemed lion like.

He gave gruff, guttural orders, and Frank was lifted and carried to a small eminence in the center of the clearing.

Here there was a stone house of larger appearance than the others.

In this the young inventor was placed and left to his own devices.

A short while later one of the Nautchi women came in with food, being the milk of goats, nuts and some strips of raw antelope steak.

Frank was hungry enough to eat anything, and he devoured this repast, which at another time would have sickened him.

He felt better after this.

He was much encouraged at the prospect of being kept a prisoner. It began to look like a chance for life.

He at once began to consider all feasible plans for escape.

But he quickly came to the conclusion that none were within easy reach.

Stalwart Nautchi warriors patrolled a beat without the hut.

His appearance would have doubtless resulted in his being brained at once.

So Frank concluded to remain in the hut.

Two days passed thus.

On the third day of his captivity Frank was led from his prison.

In the center of the great clearing he saw that a vast concourse of the dog-faced men were assembled.

They sat dog like upon the ground in a vast semi-circle with a throne of stone in the center of the crescent.

Upon this throne sat the king. Frank was led down to a position in front of the throne.

The young inventor understood at once what all this meant.

He knew that it was a tribunal or court to be held to decide his fate.

The critical time had come.

He would soon know whether life or death was to be his portion.

That it might be death he inferred with a shivering glance at certain ominous preparations visible about.

In one part of the clearing was a square pile of wood, which was, in all appearances, a funeral pyre.

Before the throne there was a bed of clean, white sand, and by it stood two of the attendants upon the king, each with a pointed staff in his hand.

The prisoner was led down before the throne, and then the king addressed him.

But what he said was all Choctaw to Frank.

The young inventor made no reply.

"I do not understand you."

This was equally unintelligible to the king. It was easily proved that they could not converse in this way.

An ingenious method was now resorted to.

The two attendants with their pointed staffs, by direction of the king began to draw quite accurate diagrams in the sand. They accompanied them with signs.

Frank watched them a few moments with interest.

Then he caught the idea.

He took one of the staffs and began making parallel diagrams. Objects were pointed out, a mark made in the sand to correspond.

In less time than one could possibly imagine, a rude sign alphabet had been formed and conversation in this way opened.

As soon as this was accomplished a question was put to Frank.

The young inventor interpreted it thus:

"You are a great king. We salute you. Will you be one of us? If you will we will spare your life. If not you must die."

Frank made reply:

"I am not of your people. I cannot do that."

But the Nautchi monarch persisted.

"You have the great thunder and lightning in your grasp. You shall teach it to us."

Frank replied:

"I cannot."

The assertion came tersely:

"You shall die!"

Frank saw that the Nautchi king was obdurate, so he continued:

"If you will spare my life and let me return to my people, I will tell you how to hold the thunder and the lightning."

The Nautchi king seemed angry.

He rose in a great wrath and seemed about to strike the prisoner.

But he refrained, and once more said:

"The white king cannot go back to his people. He is our prisoner, and must stay with us."

To this Frank made no reply.

The king again wrote:

"Why will you die?"

Frank replied:

"Because I know not fear. If you harm me, my people will come with the thunder and lightning and will kill you!"

The effect of this upon the Nautchi king was frightful.

He got up in a towering rage and gave fierce orders to his men.

They seized Frank like a puppet and threw him face downward upon the funeral pyre.

Then flames were applied to the wood and the Nautchi began a yelling dance around the pyre.

Frank Reade, Jr., experienced an awful, hopeless despair. He realized with horror that his end was at hand. There seemed no power on earth to save him.

But just as it seemed a moral certainty that his fate was sealed, a startling interruption came.

There was a sudden, tremendous explosion, the ground shook and the Nautchi gave wild, awful yells of madness.

CHAPTER XII.

AT CAPE TOWN.

After the scrape with the lions, Barney and Jedediah, with their Mamby companions, experienced no more perils until the village was reached.

A great throng greeted them there.

But there was loud wailing and sorrowful lamentations at the unfortunate result of the trip.

Pomp was nigh crazed with grief at the report that his beloved master had given up his life.

He entered hastily into Barney's proposition to at once set out for the cataract in the hopes of finding some trace of Frank.

This purpose was announced to King Loa.

The native king was also grief-stricken at the news of Frank's death.

He offered to send a large force overland, but Barney and Pomp declined.

They took leave of the Mambies with many expressions of regret.

Pomp, particularly, was loath to go.

Indeed, so royal a time had he enjoyed that he actually declared it his purpose to go back and settle down with King Loa in case Frank Reade, Jr., did not turn up alive.

"Ob co'se I nebber leave Marse Frank," declared Pomp, "but fo' de Lor' I dun like dose brack people berry much."

Barney, however, could not think of anything but his master.

Jedediah was considering his chances of ever getting home again and making Peleg Shinders pay his bet.

"By gosh, I reckon he'll bet on a sure thing next time!" declared Jedediah, with triumph. "I reckon that folks in Skattles won't call Jedediah Onslow a fule no more."

The air-ship was quickly made ready for the trip.

A short while later the White Cruiser was in the air.

Barney held a course due for the river.

He intended to scour the region. There was a lingering hope in his bosom that Frank has escaped from the cataract and was somewhere in the woods.

"Ain't goin' to give him up, be jabbers," declared Barney, "not till I see his corpse."

Soon the air-ship hovered over the exact spot where the expedition had attempted to cross the river.

But there was no sign visible of a human being.

Barney allowed the air-ship to float over the vicinity.

Pomp was leaning over the rail, looking down. Suddenly as the White Cruiser passed over a large clearing in the forest, a mighty cry escaped the darky.

"Oh, fo' de good Lor'!" he shrieked, "we're gwine found him! Bress de Lor'! Oh, bress de Lor'!"

"What ails yez?" yelled Barney, as he reached his side; "have yez got the jim-jams or a conniption fit?"

"Golly sakes, P'ish, it am Marse Frank, as sure as yo' is bo'n!"

A mighty cry went up from Barney.

"Phwere?" he roared.

"Oh, down yender, an' Lor' sabe us, de dog-faced men hab got him, an' dey's jes' gwine to burn him up alibe!"

"Tare an' 'ounds!" gasped Barney.

The whole scene was there.

Just as the Nautchi flung Frank upon the burning pyre the White Cruiser hung not four hundred feet above the clearing.

Like a flash Pomp sprang to the wheel and checked the Cruiser, holding her directly over the spot.

Barney had leaped into the cabin, and now reappeared with a dynamite projectile.

Down he hurled it into a group of the Nautchi.

The explosion was a terrific one.

Dead barbarians were thrown into the air and a hole was blown in the ground big enough to sink a house in.

Down went another projectile.

This time the hole's there, and all in the vicinity went up in smoke.

The White Cruiser was swooping down like a great bird of prey.

Down went the air-ship into the clearing.

Pomp worked the gun in the turret. Shell after shell was thrown into the woods, hitting every Nautchi like frightened sheep.

Barney stood over the rail and took a nap.

Rushing to the ground he sprang to the burning pyre and started Frank screaming from it.

The air-ship rose again, the dog-faced men were scattered, and Frank Reade, Jr., had been saved from the jaws of death.

That was the end of the fight, indeed, and all embraced with tears of joy.

"Och hone, I'd niver have given yez up, Misther Frank!" cried Barney, hilariously. "They said ye war dead, but I wudn't believe them!"

"B'gosh, I kin tell yew for sutin, Mister Reade, thet if it hedn't been fer the Irishman yew'd never hev been saved," cried Jedediah.

"I shall not forget the deed, Barney," said Frank.

All went on board the air-ship.

Frank was much exhausted, and Barney and Pomp vied in their efforts to serve him with refreshments.

The Nautchi Mba did not return to the attack.

Doubtless it had become finally impressed upon their stupid minds that they were no match for the white men.

Our adventurers did not linger long in the spot.

The White Cruiser was allowed to mount skyward.

After Frank had recovered fully, he stated his plans.

"We have accomplished one object of our mission," he declared, "and that was to establish the existence of the dog-faced men. We have done that much.

"Now, I propose to go south over the Zambesi River and finally to Cape Town. There we will pack the White Cruiser in sections and return to San Francisco by steamer. We have come a good way with the air-ship, and the strain upon the machinery has been very great. I fear that it would need repairs before we could reach home."

"Begorra, anythin' suits me now!" cried Barney.

"Dat am so wif me, too!" said Pomp.

"Gol darn my pictur, I'll be only too glad to git hum!" said Jedediah, with a chuckle. "Won't I hev some fun shuttin' up that sassy Peleg!"

"And fifteen dollars in your inside pocket," laughed Frank.

Everybody roared at this.

The White Cruiser kept to the southward for many days.

The wonderful falls of the Zambesi were visited, and many other points of interest.

It was expected to reach Cape Town in six days more, and all were looking eagerly forward to the arrival there.

No one could say that the trip had not been a great success.

South of the Zambesi there was a country renowned for its fertile resources and rich in lumber and minerals.

"I tell you what," said Frank, with conviction, "Africa is the new world. America is not in it, now. She is effete like Europe. We shall see a great country here before many years."

There are many of our readers who may follow these lines who will doubtless live to see this prediction verified.

(Continued on page 28.)

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(Continued from page 26.)

In due time Cape Town was reached.

This was quite a large place with a conglomeration of everything.

Every kind of a nationality was here represented.

The Spaniard, Portuguese, Italian, French, German and Englishman all lived in this African seaport like a happy family in a large menagerie.

There were all kinds of dwellings to suit the national tastes of the owners. Chateaux for Frenchmen, alhambras for Portuguese, bungalows for Englishmen, and cabins for Americans.

Our adventurers created a sensation by descending upon Cape Town in the fashion in which they did.

The people flocked in vast numbers to view the wonderful air-ship.

Frank, however, with Barney's and Pomp's assistance, soon had the White Cruiser packed and crated in sections.

A San Francisco steamer, the Monterey, was in the harbor.

Passage was engaged to San Francisco, and the White Cruiser stored aboard.

The sailing time of the Monterey was announced for the following day, and in the meantime our friends thought they would take a look about the town.

Some peculiar incidents were in store for them.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH IS THE END.

Almost as soon as the White Cruiser was packed aboard the Monterey, a foreign looking man came up to Frank, and said:

"Senor, I welcome you to Cape Town. I am Gonzales Madrignera, the Portuguese Mayor. I beg leave to entertain you."

Frank was in the mood for anything, so he accepted the advances of Mayor Gonzales, who was the ruler of the Portuguese colony.

The result was that our voyagers were all cordially invited up to the alhambra or palace of the mayor.

Here Senor Gonzales proceeded to do things up in shape.

Wine flowed and a beautiful repast was spread.

Until a late hour that night the entertainment extended.

All were treated like princes.

But when they arose to leave Senor Gonzales remonstrated.

"Not so, senors!" he said. "I beg you as guests until morning."

"We would willingly stay," replied Frank, "but we must not miss that steamer to-morrow."

"Ah, so!" exclaimed the polite host, "when will the steamer sail?"

"At noon, I believe."

"Ah, zat is all right. Make yourself easy, senors. I will have you conveyed to ze wharf to-morrow at noon."

So the night was spent at the palace of Senor Gonzales.

True to his word the Portuguese mayor had a fine team on hand, and the party were taken to the wharf.

But here a stunning surprise was accorded them.

"The Monterey!" exclaimed the sailing agent. "Gentlemen, I am sorry, but at the last moment, owing to a favorable tide, we changed the sailing time. The Monterey went out last night. I tried to find you, but —"

"This is a fine state of affairs!" cried Frank, furiously. "Why, I am left, and all on account of your stupidity!"

"Really, senor!" expostulated the sailing agent, "I tried to find you——"

"A likely story!" sneered Frank, "as if everybody in town did not know where we were last night!"

The young inventor refused to be pacified.

But there was no seeming way out of the dilemma but to wait and take the next steamer.

This would sail three days later.

The incident spoiled their further stay in Cape Town. When the Altruria, the next steamer, came into port, Frank and his companions immediately went on board.

"Catch me getting left again!" said the young inventor.

The voyage to San Francisco was without thrilling incident.

As soon as he got ashore Frank went at once to the shipping office.

He expected to find the White Cruiser there ready to be mounted, but, to his astonishment, it was not.

"What steamer did you send it by?" asked the freight commissioner.

"By the Monterey!"

The commissioner gave a sharp cry.

"Ah! I am sorry," he said. "Your freight is at the bottom of the sea!"

"What do you mean?" gasped Frank.

"The Monterey burned three days out, with all on board. It is very lucky for you, sir, that you did not ship on the Monterey, or you would not be here now, sir."

Frank Reade, Jr., was dumbfounded, as were his companions. The White Cruiser was lost, but what a narrow escape for the voyagers. Fate had conspired to save them.

Of, course, Frank regretted the loss of his air-ship, but he said:

"Never mind. I will supplant it with a new and more wonderful invention."

Back to Readestown the party went.

Their return created a sensation. Everybody was glad to know that they had returned alive.

Frank, true to his word, went to work upon a new invention.

Barney and Pomp dropped into the old routine of duty around the works.

Jedediah Onslow won his bet with Peleg Shinders, and became the lion of Skattles.

And this, dear reader, brings our story to

THE END.

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